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Focus ON THE REGION

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West Central Initiative's quarterly report
October, 2018

Taking It to the Streets: Area Artists Sought for Mobile Art Project



Imagine creating artwork that travels around west central Minnesota. Imagine interacting with people to help them reflect and connect to their communities. Imagine collaborating with other artists on such a venture.

That's the imagination behind a new \$10,000 art commission announced by West Central Initiative and Springboard for the Arts. The "Ready Go Mobile Art Project" seeks one artist or artist team to create a mobile, interactive tool of any medium to engage residents in nine counties in west central Minnesota.

Artists living in the counties of Becker (and White Earth Nation within Becker), Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse and Wilkin are eligible to apply.

This unique art project will be part of Springboard for the Arts' Ready Go catalog (readygoart.com) that connects neighborhoods, nonprofits, businesses and individuals to artist-created, mobile tools "that pique curiosity and prompt interaction."

Springboard for the Arts, based in St. Paul and Fergus Falls, is a nonprofit economic and community development organization serving individual artists in the Upper Midwest and beyond. The collaboration between WCI and Springboard for the Arts came from conversations about WCI's Live Wide Open (livewideopen.com) campaign that encourages people to live and work in west central Minnesota. Staff from both organizations mulled over how art could help residents examine what attracts newcomers to the nine-county region WCI serves—and what makes them stay—then build on that knowledge to create communities that welcome and engage. Springboard for the Arts' Ready

Go concept seemed like the perfect fit.

To learn more and to submit a request for qualifications application, due Thurs. Nov. 1, go to springboardforthearts.org/west-central-initiative/.



- INSIDE:**
- Area artists sought for mobile, interactive art project.
 - Make a tax-free gift to WCI through your IRA.
 - Why a child care shortage? WCI surveys providers to find out.
 - Tom McSparron retires.
 - Meet our new board members.
 - 2X a Day campaign makes learning good habits fun for parents and kids.

West Central Initiative is an equal opportunity provider, lender and employer.

We're Popping Up in a Town Near You!

West Central Initiative is holding **Pop-Up Office Hours** around the region to hear from our neighbors about what is popping up in their community. Staff spend a day talking with folks about what is new, what might be coming, what they'd love to see around the neighborhood, and what great things we could do together.

Would you like us to come to YOUR community?

Contact
Jill Amundson
at 800 735-2239
or jill@wcf.org.

Jill (at left) visits with Kensington City Clerk Jennifer Kangas.



DEADLINES

Nov. 1: Ready Go Mobile Art Commission Request for Qualifications application due. wcf.org/readygoart.html

Nov. 9: Community Change Makers Grant applications due. changemakers.wcf.org

Transportation Alternatives and Safe Routes to School MnDOT grants:

- Oct. 31, 2018 – Deadline for applicants to submit letters of intent.
- Jan. 4, 2019 – Deadline for applicants to submit full applications.
- April 16, 2019 – Grant recipients announced.

For more info, visit the Transportation Alternatives website: www.mndot.gov/ta/, or contact WCI Planning Director Wayne Hurley at wayne@wcf.org or 800 735-2239.

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Excellence. Accountability. Impact

our mission
Serving to improve west central Minnesota through funding, programs and technical assistance.

our vision
Uniting ideas and resources to help people and communities create a better tomorrow.

It's Easier Than Ever to Support West Central Initiative

Make a Tax-Free Gift From Your IRA

You've worked hard, saved diligently and are ready to enjoy your retirement years. Maybe you're also looking for a way to give back to the organizations and causes that have been important to you. Consider making a gift from your IRA.

If you're 70½ or older, you can use the IRA charitable rollover to make a tax-free gift to West Central Initiative. This law allows you to transfer any amount up to \$100,000 directly to a qualified charitable organization without paying income tax on the distribution.

When you use the IRA charitable rollover to make a gift to West Central Initiative:

- Your gift will be put to use today, allowing you to see the difference you're making.
- You pay no income taxes on the gift. The transfer doesn't generate taxable income nor affect your allowable tax deductions, so you benefit even if you do not itemize your tax deductions.
- If you have not yet taken your required minimum distribution for the year, your IRA charitable rollover gift can satisfy all or part of that requirement.

Not 70½ Yet?

You can still support our mission with your IRA. Simply name West Central Initiative as a beneficiary of your account and we'll receive the funds, or the portion you designate, after your lifetime.

Let Us Help

You don't need to be an expert in retirement planning to make a gift from your IRA. Let us walk you through it and share all the ways your gift makes a difference at West Central Initiative. Contact Rebecca Lynn Petersen at 800-735-2239 or rebecca@wcf.org to get started today.

Why a Child Care Shortage? WCI Survey Asks the Providers



When a child care business closes, it makes the local news. That's because the alarming shortage of providers in our communities—and across the nation—makes each and every closing a crisis for parents searching for high-quality care for their children, and for their employers, too.

So what can rural Minnesota do to ensure child care providers stay in business? West Central Initiative went directly to the source to find out. WCI conducted a survey of licensed family child care providers in the nine-county region of west central Minnesota that WCI serves. The 131 respondents out of 400 providers gave feedback on their experiences, joys and frustrations, and made

suggestions for how to help child care businesses succeed.

A rewarding career...

It isn't about the actual work. Nearly all respondents commented on how much they enjoy working with children. Many of them used the word "love" to describe the work they do, in particular teaching children, watching them develop, helping them with social concepts and providing them meaningful care.

...with many frustrations

"Frustrated." That's the word many providers used to express their feelings toward the licensing system, including increased regulation, more arduous

paperwork and the time taken from providing care for paperwork and site visits, plus mandatory attendance of the same trainings every year. Providers also shared their difficulties working with parents. Comments ranged from untimely or lack of payment, inattention to the rules or schedules, lack of partnership in the care of a child, expressions of the high cost of their service, and little appreciation for the care they provide. Lack of benefits was also a prevalent theme, as were long hours and no flexibility. Some providers mentioned their inability to use substitutes, either due to lack of qualified subs or having to use one of the allotted substitute days for a simple hour-long appointment.

Providers weigh in on solutions

What can be done to ensure that family child care providers stay in business? The respondents had several suggestions:

- Establish an orientation and mentoring system.
- Offer more free training options.
- Provide more support systems.
- Make it easier for providers to utilize substitute caregivers, including creating a pool, offering assistance with the cost of background checks, and providing more flexibility in using substitutes, such as number of hours instead of days.
- Generate community/public support to help providers feel appreciated.
- Explore ways to simplify and improve communications about regulations.
- Help obtain access to affordable healthcare.

READ THE ENTIRE REPORT:
childcare.wcif.org



New board members Yoke Sim Gunaratne, Barb Fabre, Val Martin, Sue Huebsch and Larry Doss. Not pictured: Nicole Fernholz.

WCI Welcomes Its Newest Board Members

Larry Doss, Barb Fabre, Nicole Fernholz, Yoke Sim Gunaratne and Val Martin join Sue Huebsch (who took over former board member Dean Simpson's term in March) as the newest members of the West Central Initiative Board.

Larry Doss returns to the board after serving from 2006 to 2012. He lives in Holmes City in Douglas County and works at Glenwood State Bank, Glenwood, as Vice President/Agricultural Lender.

Barb Fabre runs her own consulting firm, Indigenous Visioning. A member of the White Earth Nation, Barb collaborated with WCI's Early Childhood Initiative for several

years as the former director of White Earth Child Care/Early Childhood. She lives in White Earth.

Nicole Fernholz lives and works in Alexandria, where she is executive director of Living Alexandria Area Economic Development Commission, a non-profit corporation that provides leadership, collaboration and resources to assist in regional growth.

Yoke Sim Gunaratne knows WCI from her work as executive director of Cultural Diversity Resources, Inc., which serves Clay County (MN) and Cass County (ND) providing multi-ethnic leadership, diversity training and community development. She lives in Moorhead.

Val Martin is also a longtime partner with WCI through her roles as Battle Lake city clerk, treasurer and economic development director. Val lives in Ashby.

"West Central Initiative is excited to welcome our new board members," said WCI President Anna Wasescha. "Each brings a wealth of experience to bear on the important work of our governing board. They will deepen our understanding of the communities where they live and work. We're so grateful for their volunteer spirit and commitment to being stewards of our region."

Thank you, Tom



It's always hard to say goodbye to a colleague.

Tom McSparron, director of community philanthropy, retires from West Central Initiative on Oct. 26 after 10 years serving the nine-county region.

Tom's the one that, along with Director of Business and Economic Development Director Greg Wagner, visits city council members and county commissioners each year as part of the self-described "Tom and Greg Show." He's the one who provides "Fundraising 101" to so many nonprofits, who leads

and encourages our component fund advisors, who gets to see firsthand how communities make the difference, be it a baseball park in Deer Creek, a pool in Parkers Prairie, a library in Fergus Falls, a child care center in Battle Lake, or a community center in Herman.

The highlights of his tenure at WCI? "It's the people," Tom says. "Donors like Lloyd Paulson of Moorhead and Betty Cherry of Detroit Lakes, who have left lasting legacies in their

hometowns, and the people and communities that had a dream and made it a reality.

"I'm proud of what we got done," Tom acknowledges. "It's easy to retire knowing that WCI is heading in the right direction and is in the right hands."

Watch videos from Tom's retirement party at vimeo.com/wciminn

ECDN Launches "2X a Day" Campaign

The Early Childhood Dental Network has come up with a helpful and fun way to remind parents and care providers of young children to play, read and brush twice a day or more through its 2X a Day campaign. Visit wcif.org/2x-a-day/ to learn more and request a free 2X a Day magnet frame while supplies last!

